

Adolescence, Marriage, and Sex

105

ordered his kinsmen to fetch his son and tie him up. The son, unwilling to submit to this humiliation, armed himself and was prepared to fight. Rather than precipitate violence his father dropped the matter. The young man then left his father and went to live in his mother's village, where he married. After his father's death he returned to his own village and gave his father's death feasts. Even after the father's death, marriage to a stepmother would be considered incestuous. The clarification offered was, "He is the one who must give her death feasts, so it is just as though she were his real mother."

The material on incest is obviously trivial. It was practically impossible to get data, not because the informants seemed shocked, but rather because they showed so little interest and had so little to say about it. The myths and autobiographies are similarly lacking in this theme. [538] Rilpada's dreams and some slender data on Mangma might be interpreted as showing more interest in sisters than in other women. Similarly some of the women's autobiographies indicate marked attachments to brothers. I am quite sure there was no conscious and overt awareness of incestuous attachments in the informants, and their attitudes did not seem to exceed the culturally prescribed loyalty and solidarity between siblings.

In the poorly known and varied origin myths there are some implications of brother-sister incest, but again it is not emphasized. In two versions of a myth dealing with the creation of man, Manimoti and his sister Tilamoti came down to earth from above, but the stories then continued with Manimoti's activities as a culture hero, and Tilamoti dropped out completely. In another origin tale, Manimoti and Tilamoti were two of a number of children begotten by Fulani and the village guardian spirit. They did not marry. In a quite different type of origin tale, two pairs of brothers and sisters met and established the village of Bakutatang with its two lineage houses. One of the pairs had no mother or father and was supposed to have emerged from a cave. They married and bore children, who intermarried with the offspring of the other pair of brother-sister spouses. The whole tale is obviously fragmentary and is not widely known in Atimelang.

The significance of this lack of interest in the incest motif may be explicable in terms of the general thesis so far presented. If human relationships are on the whole shallow and impermanent, there is less likelihood of incestuous fixations, and when they do occur, they do not touch off a problem common to the majority of the people in the group, so that the chances may well be that even incest themes in introduced origin tales are largely otiose.

Adults and Institutions 135
Carvings of village guardian spirits, familiars, and the like are all
singularity crude, and no value is attached to them once they have been
used for sacrificial purposes. It is not unusual to see these "sacred" carv-
ings lying on the ground rotting away. (It was always considered a
windfall to be able to sell me one. Also, I found it impossible to appeal
to pride in order to procure good specimens for the museum collection I
was making, and only by repeatedly refusing to pay for the poor ones
did I get better examples of handicrafts.)

Although they are capable of building large and imposing houses,
about a third of the houses were of the shed or field-hut type, which
can be thrown together in a few days. Even an imposing new lineage
house will have the edges of its thatch torn to shreds within a year by
its owners, who pull out a handful whenever they want a torch at
night. As I have already indicated, tattooing and tooth blackening are
so unskillfully done that they fail frequently to be permanent. Basketry
is of the simplest sort, with a minimum of overlay decorations. The
Atimelangers have never acquired the arts of weaving known on the
coast, of pottery produced in villages not two hours away, or of *cire*
perdue casting known in the eastern part of the island. This is true de-
spite the fact that they know the processes fairly well, and there are no
taboos or restrictions that I could discover against the practice of such
crafts.

Their mythology is confused and unstructuralized. Their knowledge
of genealogies is so deficient that many individuals do not know their
more remote Male House kin. Ceremonial procedure is almost always a
source of fumbling and of heated argument as to proper procedure. In
respect to some of these items, it is possible that they represent newly
or partially introduced features which were not clearly understood in
the first place, or else features that were survivalistic. Regardless of the
possible historical situation, the fact remains that little is done by way
of elaboration and integration, and no effort is made to master the re-
sources of the environment.

From the point of view of depth psychology all this might well point
to a weakness in ego development. This would be in agreement with
my suggestions in the preceding chapters, that it is precisely in the
realm of ego development that the Atimelang child suffers the greatest
handicaps and receives the least encouragement. The rewards are few
and meager in childhood as well as in adult life. Men want to be rich;
they may have the drive, but more than drive is necessary for success-
ful accomplishment. Consistent training and the assurance of reward
(or penalty) are essential to learning. These two factors are largely
absent. It is not astonishing, therefore, that so many men accept the

Some Psychological Aspects of Religion

165 ⁷⁷⁵
155

mouth instead of giving food may just possibly be considered fantasies centering on infantile feeding experiences.

GOOD BEINGS

The motif of revivification by spilling food on a corpse is poorly developed in these speculations by Rilpada. It is, however, one of the most persistent myth motifs, especially in myths dealing with Good Beings (*nala kang*; literally, something good). They inhabit villages above in the sky or below in the sea. There seems to be no relation between their place of residence and the abodes of the dead. Around these beings are woven the most numerous and elaborate myths and they are an ever-present reality. The murder of the radjah in 1918 was precipitated by his followers' disrespectful treatment of a woman who had established herself in the minds of her fellow villagers as a Good Being. ⁷⁷³
⁷⁷⁶ [687]

In 1929 Malelaka had the Five Villages at a high pitch of excitement over his predictions of the imminent arrival of these supernaturals. In one day two small guesthouses were erected, an area was cleared and fenced, and in addition two stone basins were made into which would flow upon the arrival of the Good Beings two miraculous streams. In one the old could bathe and be rejuvenated; in the other, people would be healed of their illnesses. Death would disappear and death feasts were to be discontinued. Meanwhile people were to abstain from such foods as eels, crayfish, crabs, and fish. For some six recent prophets on whom there is material these ideas remain fairly constant. The interesting thing about the ideas are the fantasies they express—the desires to escape death, illness, and death feasts. The conflicts that this last prophecy created in Malelaka are reflected in his autobiography, which was given at the time when his Good Being speculations were once more active. ⁷⁸⁷ [262]

That such wishful thinking was not limited to Malelaka and his fellow prophets is evinced by the cooperation they received in preparing for these supernaturals. People from many surrounding villages were sufficiently credulous to bring their sick to the expected advent. There was in fact so much excited interest that the government sent up the full garrison of troops to destroy the structures and arrest Malelaka. This interference plus the disastrous war of 1918 led to the growth of a good deal of scepticism, and the tentative Good Being talk current in 1938 and 1939 was meeting with much incredulity. The inclination to abandon what has been a failure seems to me a consistent part of the nonfanatical and realistic temperament of Atimelangers. They are far ⁷⁷¹
⁷⁸⁷ [648] ¹⁵⁷

The People of Alor

157 from lacking in stubborn persistence, but when an issue has been definitely defeated, they are ready to give it up.

776 Good Beings are thought of as human in every respect except for their miraculous powers, among which is their ability to revive the dead and to travel through air and water. Human beings who disappear are often suspected of having become supernaturals of this sort. About 1935 four young men were drowned when a boat capsized near the coast.

[775] Only three bodies were recovered. In 1938 it was believed in some circles that the one whose body had not been found was now a Good Being and was inspiring the prophecies of a five- or six-year-old girl (page 77ff.). This motif of people's disappearing rather than really dying, and then being transformed into Good Beings is quite common in the myths.

● [773] To give an idea of the type of Good Being tale three condensed myths follow.

Masingbal and Dry Land Woman

773 Masingbal went to the coast with his six brothers, who deserted him there. He went to sleep so hungry that he chewed the fringe of his shawl. As he slept his mother and father appeared to him and told him how to get food and how to avoid a village of cannibals on his journeys. When Masingbal awoke he followed his father's instructions and reached the village boundary of Farik, a Good Being. Farik's two daughters met him and reported to their father that the stranger resembled him. Farik, fully armed, went to meet Masingbal and was convinced of his good intentions. He invited the young man to sit on his verandah and ordered his daughters to prepare food. When it was ready Masingbal was asked to enter the house. As he climbed the ladder, the sisters poured a pot of millet on his head, and he fell back on the verandah, shedding his shroud, burial rope, and maggots. The sisters covered his body with a shawl and the older one sat near his buttocks, blowing on them with a fire tube. The younger sister sat at his head, fanning him with a fire fan. When Masingbal awoke, the two girls fed him, and Farik ordered Masingbal to sleep that night between the two women. Masingbal was obedient but did not have intercourse with them, saying, "You two are good. I am fortunate to have met you, but, my sisters, I shall not embrace you." The girls reported this to Farik, who then ordered Masingbal to have intercourse with them.

The three thereafter worked together in the fields. After a time the two wives discovered that Masingbal was not working, but instead stood crying all day at a hole which he had made when uprooting weeds

Some Psychological Aspects of Religion

167

and through which he could look down on his own village. The girls⁷⁷³ told their father, who then insisted that all three should descend to earth and visit Masingbal's home.

Masingbal was alone, however, when he reached his village. By bathing in a spring, he turned himself into a person covered with yaws. He asked four women who came to fetch water to give him a drink. Three rejected his request and made insulting references to his condition. The fourth gave him a drink and spoke sympathetically. He sent her back to the village and promised to come in six days with a bride-price. On the sixth day people were dragging in the posts of his lineage house. Masingbal appeared with gongs and pigs, which he deposited on the verandah of Dry Land Woman, the girl who had been kind to him. He ignored all the invitations offered by others.

The two supernatural wives now came to join Masingbal and his new wife, Dry Land Woman. There was a shortage of food. Dry Land Woman asked Masingbal to help her climb for mangoes. When he was up in the tree, she took away the ladder, leaving him stranded. He was rescued by his two supernatural wives.

On another day Dry Land Woman killed Masingbal by dropping a heavy stone on him when he was down in a pit digging tubers for her. Again his sky wives found him and with the help of their father, Farik, were able to bring him to life again.

A third time Dry Land Woman tried to kill Masingbal, this time by sending him up an areca tree whose roots she had cut so that it toppled over with him. Again the other wives and his father-in-law revived him.

That night Masingbal called a dance. Toward dawn he and his father-in-law both seized the gongs and rose into mid-air with the two sky women. Half of his village also rose with them and came to rest in Farik's village. The other half of his village, containing Dry Land Woman and all the people who were quarreling, slipped down the mountainside into the sea.

This tale is interesting for the contradictory image of wives it presents and particularly in the fact that the malicious wife was the human one, whereas the fantasy Good Beings were nurturing and revivifying. Also, there is a picture of a kindly father-in-law with no talk of bride-price in marriage. This is in contrast to Masingbal's purchase of Dry Land Woman. Avoiding payment of a bride-price is, of course, quite aberrant to practice and may constitute wishful fantasies. Equally aberrant to actual custom is marrying sisters. In the story parents were given a protective role, whereas the siblings deserted their young brother — a detail that must have childhood associations for most Atimelangers. Worth

- 773 noting is the long-suffering character of the hero, who in the end takes violent revenge.

Masingbal and His Son Metinglaug

Masingbal* had six sons and an adopted male slave. When his wife was pregnant once more, he left, telling her that if the child was born a male it was to be killed, but if it was a female to keep it until his return. The woman bore a son, but instead of killing him she hid him on a mountaintop with a large supply of food and male adornments. Meanwhile she buried a coconut and sacrificed a chicken. On the husband's return he thrust a spear into the grave, and coconut milk seeped out. The husband was convinced that she had followed his instructions until a rooster told him of the ruse.

Masingbal then set out with his seven children to kill Metinglaug. He sent each of his sons in turn up the slope to kill their youngest brother. Each was offered food, accepted it, and then could not find the heart to slay his young sibling. Each returned and confessed his inability, giving as an excuse that the young man's face resembled that of his father. Finally the father went up, refused the proffered food, and, while the son passively submitted, successively blinded him, slashed his mouth, cut off his hand, and slit open his abdomen. Three days later two women, as they fetched water, saw Metinglaug's reflection in the pool. They searched for him and having found his body, replaced his organs with those of a dog and brought him to life with a fire fan and fire tube. When he was revived, they fed him and instructed him in what he must say when he met their father. From here on the tale proceeds much as does the foregoing one except that on Metinglaug's return to his native village it was his father instead of his earthly wife who tried to kill him.

There are in this story some contrasts in the role assigned kin. In this tale the brothers and mother are the kindly figures and the father is the sinister one. Again, however, the father-in-law gives wives to the hero without asking for a bride-price, and supernatural women have the power to restore life.

Momau the Crow Being

Momau and his brother went on a trading trip to the coast. The coastal people falsely charged Momau with theft. They bound his hands and feet and for three days dragged him behind their boat.

* The Masingbal in this story is apparently a completely different character from the hero of the preceding tale.

Some Psychological Aspects of Religion

169

Finally he freed himself and suddenly found that he was seated on the top branches of a mango tree. He climbed down the tree and was discovered by two supernatural women. As in the other two myths, Farik, the father of the women, was reassured as to his intentions and invited him to the village, where he was revived by the usual millet treatment and the use of fire tube and fan. After his marriage to the two women, Momau began to feel homesick and with the help of his father-in-law went back to the surface of the sea and from there to his own village. His two supernatural wives had been transformed into a conch shell horn and a green glass bottle. These he neglected after securing a third wife in his own community.

A wild pig began to root up Momau's sweet potatoes. He went to guard the field and in an attempt to shoot the animal he was disarmed. (This is presumably a punishment for the neglect of the two sacred objects, his transformed wives.) The villagers all pursued the pig, which escaped by flying into the sea and changing into a porpoise.

Meanwhile his father-in-law, Farik, disguised as a Kebola man, went to Momau's village and miraculously healed him. The following day Farik transformed Momau into a crow and then back again into human form. Thereafter Momau himself possessed the power of healing severed bodies; this he demonstrated on his dog and child. He was also capable of assembling a shattered ax by simply blowing on it. His third wife was alarmed by these powers and said he had become a witch, whom all would avoid. Momau then turned into a crow and flew back to Farik's village taking with him the first two wives in the form of a conch shell horn and a glass bottle.

MALIGNANT SUPERNATURALISM

All this material on Good Beings represents, on the whole, wishful fantasizing about a better world and kinder characters, without quite eliminating the uncertainty and harshness of real relationships. Although Good Beings are usually wonderful and enviable, there are categories of supernaturals envisaged with equal specificity who are consistently malignant.

Witches are among the most concretely visualized of such beings. very much doubt that anyone in Atimelang is considered a witch or practices witchcraft. However, Atimelangers are convinced that certain villages are witch-ridden, and Kewai, their enemy of the last war, is one of them. Men and women both can be witches; most frequently they gain power over people by inviting them to have sexual intercourse. Then, while the person sleeps, the witch steps over the partner's